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Bulletin: Law Change will aid TFIRS reporting

In May, the Tennessee General Assembly approved a bill clarifying that fire departments, their employees and volunteers cannot be held liable for information provided to the TFIRS/NFIRS database in good faith and without malice.

This clarification was needed to eliminate any hesitance among fire officials regarding TFIRS reporting, particularly in reporting the suspected cause of a fire incident.

The Fire Marshal's Office has found that some Tennessee Fire Departments have been reluctant to report a suspected cause of a fire, fearing that the report could become the basis of a lawsuit. While we believe that fear was unfounded, we sought this clarification to remove all doubt.

It is extremely important that all Tennessee fire departments report to TFIRS – accurately and fully. We are analyzing TFIRS data to determine how we can best lower Tennessee's high rate of fire death. Without the data on suspected cause, TFIRS can't give us the information we need to fight fire death.

The new law is Public Chapter 644, TCA 68-102-111(a).